

## The symbolism of plants in D.H. Lawrence's story "England, my England" in the context of Englishness

Khabibullina L.

Kazan Federal University, 420008, Kremlevskaya 18, Kazan, Russia

---

### Abstract

The article deals with the story "England, My England" (1915) by D.H. Lawrence which plays a prominent role in shaping the idea of Englishness in the literature of the twentieth century, based on the investigations of the 19th century. At that time one of the leading roles here belonged, in the author's opinion, to the study of the diversity of national types in England and their influence on English culture in works by Matthew Arnold, who is considered by many researchers as the founder of the concept of Englishness. In the article the author studies the system of characters and the "plant" symbolism in connection with national types. The analysis of the characters allows to make a conclusion about the author's conception of Englishness. In the story, D.H. Lawrence creates a realistic (the action took place in the period before World War I) and at the same time symbolical picture of life in Britain, where the concept of national character appears in its mythological version with the typical modernist emphasis on the cultural component as an immanent feature of national character. The mythological picture of the world in the story by D.H. Lawrence is created using "vegetative" symbols. Images of plants appear in the story in two ways: first, directly as part of the English countryside, ancient England, embodied in the form of a garden; second, as characteristics of the protagonists through Lawrence's key images of the fictional world - a Tree and a Rose. The study revealed that the "flower" symbols are used in order to embody the aristocratic values and the values of culture (folklore). The fragility and beauty of the flower represent the disappearance of this system of values. Characters which are connected with the series of "tree" comparisons demonstrate the force and power as the natural procreation of the English land. Implicitly the "flower" and the "tree" symbols are connected with aristocracy and bourgeoisie, but Lawrence does not give strict social characteristics, he prefers the language of symbols. It is important that Lawrence does not consider the bourgeoisie as something alien to England, as an external element. "Tree" symbolism allows to consider this type of people as fruits of the land. The research demonstrates that vegetative symbolism becomes most important in the British national myth, if to understand how important the value of nature and landscape in the culture of England is. This type of symbolization becomes a major feature of the rootedness of the character in the English land. The system of vegetative images creates a mythologized image of England as an ancient land whose secrets remain incomprehensible to us.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17223/19986645/48/14>

---

### Keywords

Celtic, D.H. Lawrence, Englishness, Image of rose, Norman, Saxon, Vegetative symbols

## References

- [1] Ebbatson, R. (2005) *An Imaginary England: Nation, Landscape and Literature, 1840-1920*. Ashgate.
- [2] Gikandi, S. (2007) *The Ghost of Matthew Arnold: Englishness and the Politics of Culture*. *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*. 29:2-3, June/September 2007. pp. 187-199.
- [3] Leerssen, J. (2006) *Englishness, Ethnicity and Matthew Arnold*. *European Journal of English Studies*. 10:1. April 2006. pp. 63-79.
- [4] Kelleher, J. (1950) *Matthew Arnold and the Celtic Revival*. In: Levin, H. (ed.) *Perspectives of Criticism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [5] Arnold, M. (1867) *On the study of Celtic literature*. London: Smith, Elder and Co. [Online] Available from: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=hysCAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=ru#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- [6] Sokolova, N. (2004) *Viktorianets ob anglichanakh: k probleme osmysleniya natsional'noy identichnosti v kontekste epokhi* [A Victorian about the British: to the problem of understanding national identity in the context of the era]. In: Stulov, Yu. V. (ed.) *Problemy identichnosti, etnosa, gendera v kul'ture i literaturakh starogo i novogo sveta* [Problems of identity, ethnicity, gender in culture and literature of the old and new world]. Minsk: Propilei.
- [7] Rivers, B. (2012) *Winter-Crack Trees: Botanical Symbolism And D. H. Lawrence's 1914 Revisions Of Odour Of Chrysanthemums. Notes and Queries*. 59 (3). pp. 411-413. [Online] Available from: <https://nq.oxfordjournals.org/content/59/3/411.full.pdf+html?sid=951fadd-e14c-4d53-a94e-153168d38250>. (Accessed: 25th October 2016).
- [8] Antonova, K. N. (2011) *Khudozhestvennyy mir prozy D. G. Lorensa 1910-kh godov* [The artistic world of D. G. Lawrence's prose of the 1910s]. Abstract of Philology Cand. Diss. St. Petersburg.
- [9] Abelyan, M. K. (2012) *Funktsionirovanie mifologicheskikh obrazov v tvorchestve Deyvida Gerberta Lorensa* [The functioning of mythological images in the works of David Herbert Lawrence]. Abstract of Philology Cand. Diss. Voronezh.
- [10] Lawrence, D. H. (1915) *Angliya, moya Angliya* [England, My England]. Translated from English by L. Il'inskaya. [Online] Available from: <http://lib.ru/INPROZ/CHATER/r-england.txt>. (Accessed 25th April 2010).
- [11] Lawrence, D. H. (1915) *England, My England*. [Online] Available from: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/lawrence/dh/l41en/chapter1.html>. (Accessed 20th November 2016).
- [12] Breeva, T. N. & Khabibullina, L. F. (2009) *Natsional'nyy mif v russkoy i angliyskoy literature* [The national myth in Russian and English literature]. Kazan: Tatar State University of Humanities and Education.